



Health Services
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May 11, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bruce A. Chernof, M.D. 
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **CHINESE GRAVE MARKERS**

On April 4, 2006, your Board requested that the Department of Health Services (DHS) investigate the relocation of grave markers from Chinese persons who were buried in the nearby Chinese cemetery that is adjacent to the County operated cemetery and crematorium, and to report back on why and when the markers were removed from their original locations.

The Department has conducted a preliminary investigation into the grave markers. Based on the personal visit to the cemetery by myself and Chief Deputy Director, and interviews we conducted with DHS staff who operate the cemetery and the archeologist retained by the MTA to investigate the original Chinese cemetery, we have determined the following:

- There are between 10 to 15 grave markers along the driveway of the County cemetery and crematorium
- Based on discussions with the DHS staff person who has worked at the site for more than 20 years, and what he had been told by his predecessor who also worked there for more than 20 years, the markers were there at least 40 years ago
- Discussions with the MTA archeologist, revealed the theory that the markers have been moved to their current location around 1918, when the cemetery area was enlarged and the markers had been moved as a part of that process
- As a result of our review, it is impossible to determine exactly when or who moved these grave markers only that it was done around 85 years ago by unknown individuals.

In response to the second part of Supervisor Molina's motion, DHS arranged to retain a trained archeology firm with expertise in dealing with these types of issues, and with demonstrated cultural sensitivity, to work with DHS staff to properly catalogue and document the markers prior to removing them, and to arrange to have them removed. The firm has been identified and will begin their work on May 15, 2006.

In conjunction with the archeologist, the CEO of LAC+USC Medical Center, who has organizational responsibility for the cemetery and crematorium, has been assigned to work with the Chinese historical and cultural organizations to insure that the markers are relocated to an appropriate location. The CEO attended a meeting of the Chinese Historical Society where representatives of the MTA and their archeologist made a presentation on their work and the Department on its efforts in regards to the grave markers.

Until the archeologist has completed the documentation and catalogue work, the Department will be unable to establish a specific timeline for when the markers will be removed. The Department will establish a final timeline for the relocation of the grave markers, once the work with the Chinese community has been completed.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

BAC:jrc
604:005

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors